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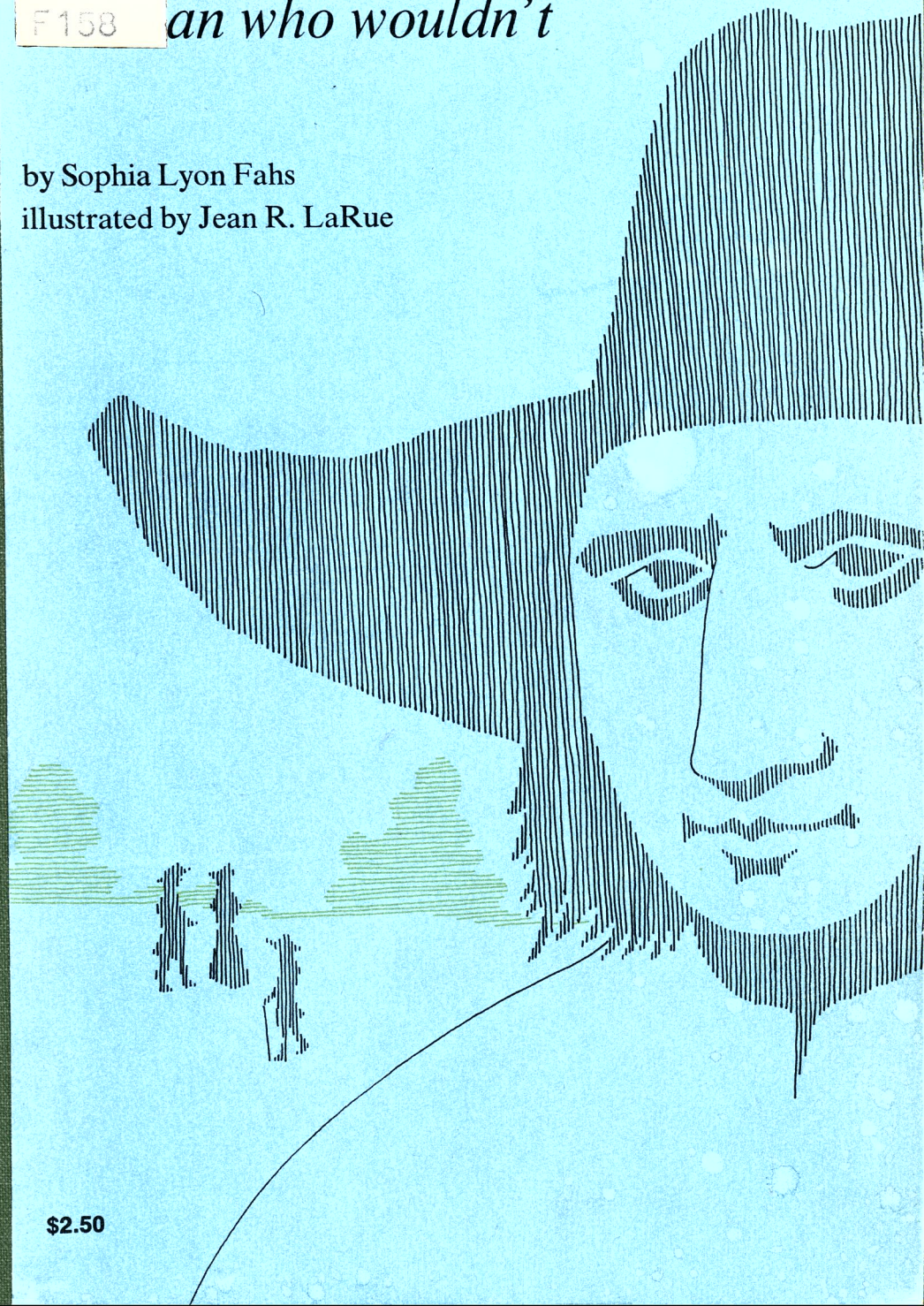
EORGE FOX

an who wouldn't

by Sophia Lyon Fahs
illustrated by Jean R. LaRue



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"Straight as an oak, clear as a bell"

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GEORGE FOX

The man who wouldn't

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by Sophia (Blanch 1876-) Lyon Fahs
illustrated by Jean R. LaRue

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CONTENTS

1

The man who wouldn't tip his hat *page 1*

2

The man who wouldn't go to church *page 10*

3

The man who wouldn't pretend *page 18*

4

The man who wouldn't carry a sword *page 28*

About The Author

Dear Reader:

This little book brings you stories of a most unusual young man, told by a very remarkable lady, now past ninety years of age.

During her entire life, Sophia Lyons Fahs has been thinking and learning about people, about what makes living worthwhile. In the early days of their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Fahs worked in China where he was a Presbyterian missionary. Later she became an outstanding teacher at Riverside Church in New York City where she organized a new kind of Sunday School. Here, learning was by experiencing and sharing and not by memorizing and repeating what someone else had said or done. The success of this experiment led to the writing of many books and stories for children and young people, and of guides for parents and teachers. These, and other later works, written or edited by Mrs. Fahs became the new curriculum of Religious Education of the Unitarian Church. Many Friends' groups were happy to use these materials too, and thus they discovered Sophia Fahs.

Now, in these pages, she has made George Fox, that far-away First Quaker, come alive for you today.

Sincerely, your friend,
Amelia W. Swayne

June 1971

1

The man who wouldn't tip his hat

There were a number of things that George Fox would not do which most other men in England did three hundred years ago.

In the first place, there were many men in England at that time who shaved their heads, claiming that all really good men should have very short hair. Other men let their hair grow, saying that all really good men should have long hair. Now George Fox let his hair grow till it hung about his neck, and with one especially fine curl at the back. He said, "Long hair or short hair has nothing to do with making a man good or bad. I will wear my hair the way I choose."

Also in those days three hundred years ago, it was the fashion for men to wear knee-short velvet trousers and buckled slippers, bright sashes and broad white collars and cuffs. But George Fox wore rough, high boots and plain brown leather trousers of his own sewing. This

again made him odd looking, but he had his own reasons for what he did.

George Fox was a man who lived very much out of doors. He was a traveling preacher without a church—or rather his places of worship were on hillsides and in village markets, in front of castle walls or in prison cells. He was a tireless walker, tramping from village to village to preach. He slept so much of the time under hedges and on hay stacks or simply on the dry leaves in the woods that some people used to say, "George Fox will not sleep in a bed." He was not the sort to care for fancy clothes; the same leather suit and high boots lasted him year after year. People sometimes spoke of him simply as "the man in leather breeches."

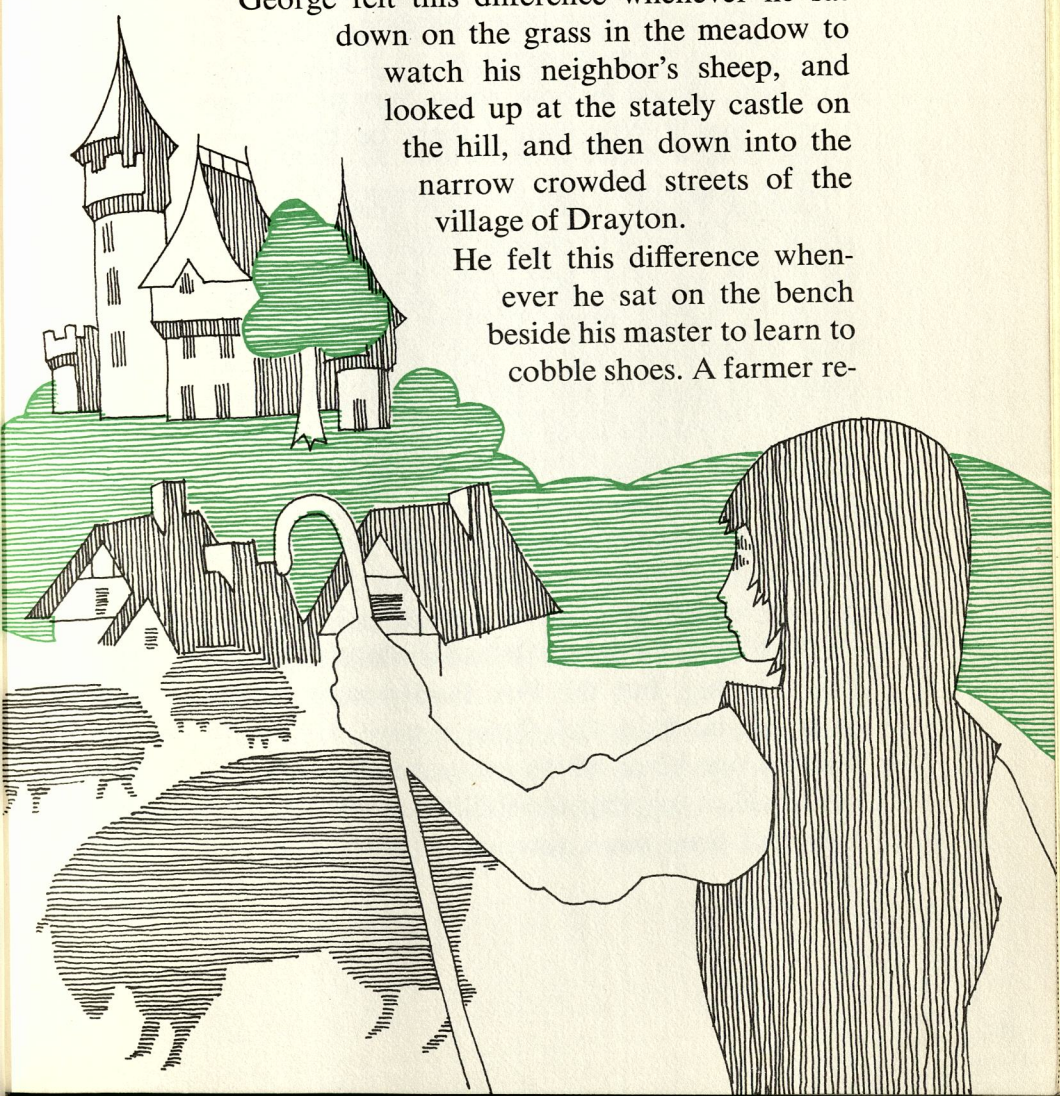
It was not only his looks that were odd. George Fox himself was different from other men who lived in England three hundred years ago. Just because he was different, he had perhaps both more enemies and more friends than any other man in England. His enemies said he bewitched them with his evil eye. Others spread the rumor that he carried about with him small bottles of magic medicine with which he made people love him. Some called him a traitor and a scoundrel. His friends, on the other hand, thought he was almost as great as Jesus himself. One young admirer walked one hundred and fifty miles just to have a talk with him even though George Fox was in jail at the time. Now three hundred years after he lived, George Fox is remembered and honored by thousands of people.

There were four especially important things that George Fox wouldn't do which made him different from most men of his time and for which he is still remembered. I shall tell about these four things in four separate stories.

George Fox was the son of an honest weaver in the English village of Drayton. Like the other boys of the village he was but a small boy when he began to earn a few shillings to help support the family. This he did by helping his father with his weaving and by learning to be a shoemaker in the shop of a neighbor. Like the other boys in the village, George soon learned that there were two kinds of boys, rich boys and poor boys, boys who were thought to be important and boys who were considered of little account.

George felt this difference whenever he sat down on the grass in the meadow to watch his neighbor's sheep, and looked up at the stately castle on the hill, and then down into the narrow crowded streets of the village of Drayton.

He felt this difference whenever he sat on the bench beside his master to learn to cobble shoes. A farmer re-



turning from the field would pass the door. Scarcely lifting his eyes from his work, the master shoemaker would say in a commonplace voice, "Hello, thou art late. Thy wife is looking for thee," or some casual remark. But should the lord of the castle step to his door, the shoemaker would rise quickly from his seat, tip his hat and bow very low. "Your humble servant, Sir Charles," he would say most politely.

George Fox began to think. Were rich people really more important than poor people? Should he, when speaking to farmers or weavers, to shepherds or beggars, do as others did, pay little attention, and use "thee" and "thou;" and when speaking to an officer in a red coat or to a lord, should he bow, speak very politely and use the word, "you"? Why should there be these two kinds of people?

George began thinking about these things when as a small boy he went to church. Like the rest of the villagers, he had to go early before the Purefoy family from the castle on the hill came. Waiting in the stiff-backed seats, they would watch for the private door at the side of the church to open. As the lord and lady of the castle and all the little would-be lords and ladies of their family filed in, that instant George Fox and all the other villagers rose from their seats, lifted their hats and bowed.

George wondered about these two kinds of people when, alone in the woods leaning against his favorite tree, he would read his one precious book. Perhaps the young knights in the castle had a whole shelf of books for their reading, but the Fox family were proud to have even one book in their little cottage, especially since it was the one book which everyone else was buying who could gather together the shillings needed to pay for it.

It had been but a few years before George Fox was

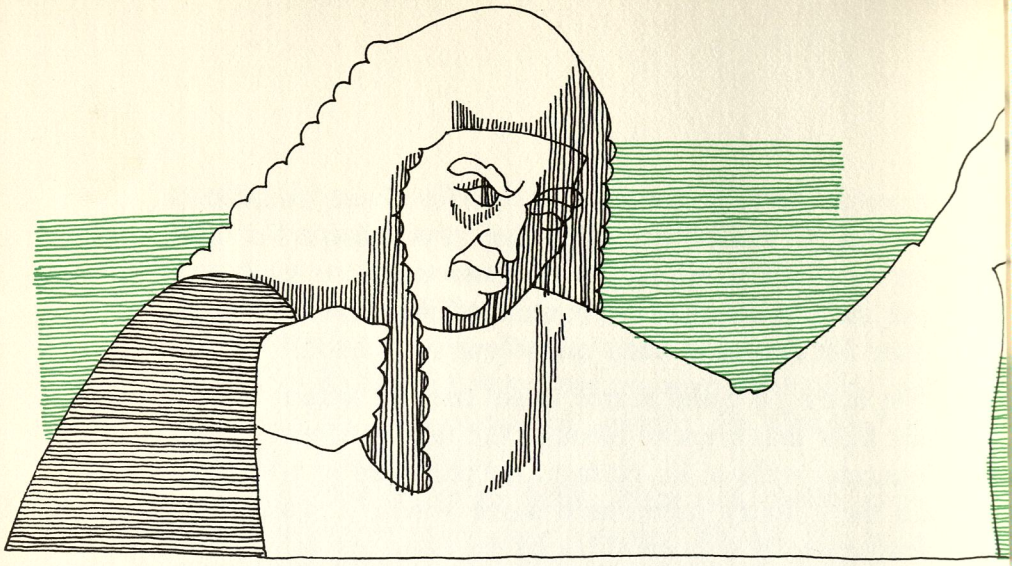
born that the Bible for the first time had been translated into English and printed altogether in one book. For the first time in the history of England ordinary weavers' boys, such as George Fox, could read the Bible for themselves. To George it was a marvelous story book.

At home he could scarce make out the letters in the faint light that crept in through the tiny windows in the thick mud walls of his cottage. He preferred to walk out into the country somewhere alone where it was light; there he would read his Bible by the hour. As he read he thought about these things all the more. Was God a Father who loved every one, as Jesus said? Or did God have favorites? Were some boys important to God and were others of little account?

As a young man, he continued to think a great deal about these things. Sometimes he was very unhappy. Often he would not play when the boys asked him. Finally the time came when he was sure of his answer. He said: "It matters not what others do; I will never tip my hat or bow to any one, not even the King himself. There is one only before whom I will humble myself by bowing and that one is God. To God, one person is as important as another. God loves a beggar as well as a lord. I, too, will respect a man in rags as much as one in velvets."

He even went further. He decided never to call anyone a nickname or to speak to him disrespectfully. He would not say "you" to the rich and "thee" and "thou" when speaking to the villagers. He would use "thee" and "thou" in speaking to everyone.

When George Fox once decided a question like that, there was no changing him. People used to say of him, "George Fox is clear as a bell and stiff as an oak." It is strange how much trouble this decision made for him.



Some years later, the little town of Launceston was crowded with curious country folk. Some were friends and some were enemies of the three strange prisoners who had been held for nine weeks waiting for the great judge to come down from London to hold court. These prisoners were no ordinary thieves or murderers that were to be tried, but good men whose doings had been misunderstood, yet it was rumored that the three prisoners were to be hung. Such a crowd had gathered in the room that the jailer could scarcely make his way with his line of prisoners into the crowded court and to the enclosure behind the rails.

The learned judge was sitting on his high bench looking very grand in his scarlet robes, wearing his curly grey wig over his own hair. Lifting his eyes he faced the three plainly dressed prisoners standing with their broad brimmed hats shading their faces, pale from nine weeks in the dark prison cell. To his surprise, the prisoners did not bow their heads; their hats were not lifted. The judge stared at the prisoners and the prisoners stared at the judge. Finally, "the man in leather breeches" said, "Peace be to thee your honor."

"What be these men you have brought into the court?" the judge asked the jailer.

"Prisoners, my Lord."

"Why do you not put off your hats?" said the judge, insulted by what he thought were their impudent manners.

No one answered.

"Put off your hats," he said sternly.

Still no one spoke and no hat was lifted.

"The court commands you to put off your hats."

Then spoke George Fox. "When did ever any magistrate, king or judge command any to put off their hats when they came before them in their courts? If the law of

England doth command any such thing, show me that law, either written or printed."

Then the judge grew very angry and said, "I do not carry my law books on my back. Take him away and put him back with the prisoners. I am done with him."

"Such a little thing to make so much trouble about," some said. There were times when George Fox himself thought the same; yet again it seemed a very important thing. For men to give such praise and honor as tipping the hat meant what George Fox called "hat worship." He would worship God alone.

In his own words, he has told us of what he suffered: "When the Lord sent me forth into the world, he forbade me to put off my hat to anyone, high or low; and I was required to say "thee" and "thou" to all men and women without respect to rich or poor, great or small. And as I travelled up and down, I was to bid people good-morrow, or good-evening, neither might I bow or scrape my leg to anyone.—Oh! the rage that was in the priests and magistrates and professors and people of all sorts.—Oh! the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments that we underwent for not putting off our hats to men! . . . Some had their hats plucked off and thrown away, so that they quite lost them. The bad language and evil usage that we received on this account are hard to be expressed, besides the danger we were in sometimes of losing our lives in this matter."

George Fox also tells how one morning, after having been imprisoned for some months, he was taken to the palace of Oliver Cromwell who was then ruling all England in place of a king. Others coming into the presence of this great man not only would take off their hats but they would also kneel, and say, "Your highness" or "Lord Protector," but not so George Fox. Walking right

over to where Cromwell was sitting and looking him straight in the eye, Fox simply said what he would have said on entering the cottage of a peasant, "Peace be to this house."

Strange to say, Oliver Cromwell was not offended. They talked together for a long time. Cromwell seemed to realize that he was in the presence of a brave, good man. He liked George Fox. As George Fox turned to leave, Oliver Cromwell took him by the hand and with tears in his eyes said: "Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour a day together, we should be nearer one to the other. I wish no more harm to thee than to my own soul."

Before George Fox left the great hall, the news was sent to him, "Cromwell hath granted thee thy freedom."

2

The man who wouldn't go to church

Another queer idea made George Fox even more trouble than his idea about "hat worship."

In England three hundred years ago everybody, children and grown-ups alike, went to church. It was the law that they should do so. If more than five persons met to worship anywhere else than in a church, or if anyone said one word against the church, he could be put in jail.

George Fox, like all other small boys of his time, began going to church when he was very young and early started asking questions about the many things that happened there.

He wondered when he saw the minister walking up narrow winding stairs to the high pulpit. Why should he be so high above everybody else? It tired George's neck to watch him. He wondered why the minister walked to the far end of the church and turned his back to the people when he prayed. Why was it that he used such a sing-song voice that George could not understand a word he was saying? Why did he keep the candles burning on the altar? Why didn't the choir boys sing words he could understand?

It was very tedious for George to sit still in the stiff hard seat trying to listen while the minister preached, sometimes for as long as three hours! The preacher scolded so much, and told of so many things the people should not do. He had so much to say about the punishments God would bring on those who would not listen. Yet when George tried to listen he could not understand.

The minister seemed to be the only one who understood God. The minister seemed to be the only one great enough to pray to Him. God seemed far away and cruel.

It was very important for George Fox as a boy to do just as he was told while he was in church. There were certain times when he had to kneel and certain times when he had to stand. If the name of Jesus was mentioned he must bow his head. If he forgot he was reminded by a punch in the arm. Why he should have to do these things, he did not know.

One day word came that King Charles had ordered all the altars to be moved to the eastern ends of the churches so that everyone in praying would turn his face toward Jerusalem. Why did these things matter so much? Wouldn't God listen to prayers except in the church? Did God like the candles and the kneeling and the long prayers? Why should one man tell all the rest just what they should do and what they should not do?

Did God teach only the preachers and the king?

As he grew older these questions troubled George Fox even more than the question about tipping his hat. When he sat under the oak tree reading his Bible, it seemed to him that some of the men who wrote the Bible thought that God was near and cared for everyone. Who was right? Just as truly as any explorer ever set out to hunt for the North Pole, George Fox set out to hunt for God.

He first went to Mr. Stephens, the minister, in his own village church. He asked him many of these questions, but Mr. Stephens could not help him find God. Finally George Fox said good-bye to his father and mother, his brother and sisters and his play fellows and started on his long hunt to find God. He tramped from town to town, talking with this minister and that. He asked them what they really meant when they prayed those long prayers. Somehow they could not tell him what he wanted to know. For two whole years he wandered from one town to another, looking for someone to help him find God, but he found none who knew how to help him.

Then at last George Fox decided that neither the people who went to church nor the preachers meant what they said. Their praying and singing were all a sham. He refused to go to church. He couldn't bear to hear the singing. Even the sound of the church bells on Sunday mornings "struck at his heart" as he put it. He disliked seeing the tall steeples on the churches. They seemed to point to a far away God. They, too, were a sham.

Yet, for all this, George Fox would not give up his hunt for God. He went alone into the woods, away from the candles and the choirs and the altars and the high pulpits. He went alone with his Bible. Where was God? Could he find Him? If God were really far away up in the sky he would like to have soared with the lark to

find Him. He could but read his Bible and wonder and try to pray. In the stillness of the woods such wonderful thoughts came to him all alone that it seemed that God, even God himself, must be speaking to him; yes, right to him; and he, George Fox, a weaver's boy must be speaking to God. No priest was telling him what to say or when to speak. He did not have to kneel. God himself seemed nearer to him than his own beating heart. He felt like leaping for very joy. It seemed as if God had opened a window and given him a breath of fresh air. He was a new man.

Then the thought came to him, "If God can speak to me, a weaver's son, he can speak to any man, woman or child in the world who wants to listen. God will speak to him just as truly as the Bible says He ever spoke to Moses or Paul or John. God did not live in the churches men had built of stone. It was wrong to call them holy places. God was good and loving and was to be found in the quiet woods and in the busy market places, indeed anywhere that anyone wished to talk with Him."

George Fox decided to spend the rest of his life helping others to find God. While most people went as usual to church, he and those who began to be interested in what he had to say would meet in the house of a friend, or out on a hilltop or in the market place. In George Fox's meetings anyone could be the preacher, even women and children might speak whenever they felt they had something they wished to say. Sometimes they would all sit quietly without saying a word for an hour at a time. They were trying to listen to God; perhaps He would give them some new thought. It was such a thrilling experience to feel that God was with them that sometimes their bodies trembled. So it happened, one story goes, that their enemies gave them the nickname, "Quakers," or the people

who trembled or quaked, but they called themselves "Friends"; for they considered themselves "Friends of the Truth."

It was a very dangerous thing to hold those meetings instead of going to church. According to the law of the land, they could be put in prison for it. They were accused of being traitors to the king. Again and again the policeman tried to break up their meetings, and again and again George Fox and others of his friends were beaten and put in jail.

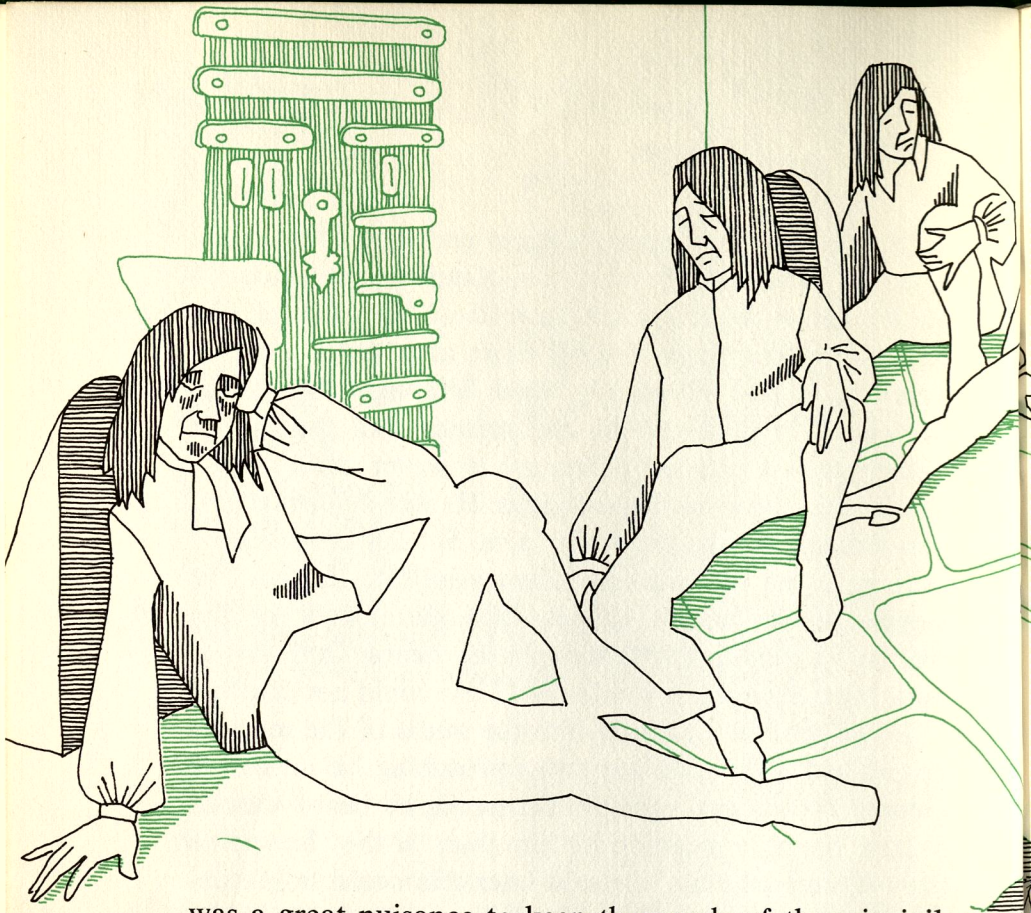
One day in 1650, as the story goes, when George Fox was in prison, having been there for six months, he was called to appear in court before Justice Bennet to be questioned. During the period of his questioning Fox made some general statements regarding the evil days in which men were living, and, in his usual outspoken manner, he declared that the time had come when men should "quake and tremble before the Lord" for their wrongdoings. The judge responded, so it was said, with this remark, "So you are the Quakers are you?" When the

story was told and repeated again and again the name, Quaker, stuck and became the common title used by those outside the fellowship instead of "Children of the Light" or "Friends of Truth." Even after three hundred years it is still commonly used although the name, "Friends," is preferred by the members of the group.

George Fox was not contented, however, merely with speaking in those outside meetings. He was determined to "cry out against the churches." One Sunday morning, he tells us, as he was walking down a hillside, he saw the steeple of St. Mary's chapel. The mere sight of the steeple was enough. He thought he heard God say to him, "Go, cry against yonder idol." He could not disobey.

Down the hill and right into the midst of the meeting he walked. The minister was preaching. For awhile George Fox listened quietly; the words he heard seemed to have no more meaning for him than "if they had come from a lump of clay," he said later. He could hold himself back no longer. He walked up to the front of the church and stood alongside of the pulpit. The minister was too startled to go on with his preaching. Instead George Fox began speaking. He told them that if they would but listen God would speak to each one of them directly; they did not need the preacher to pray for them; they could pray to God alone anywhere. The people in the church thought him very rude and were angered. He had spoken but a few moments when soldiers stepped up behind him, caught hold of him, tied his arms together, and led him away to live for weeks in a prison room, small and dark and bad smelling.

The more they suffered, however, the more determined these Quakers became, and the larger the number of those who followed them. They were a difficult people to keep down because they refused to be discouraged. It

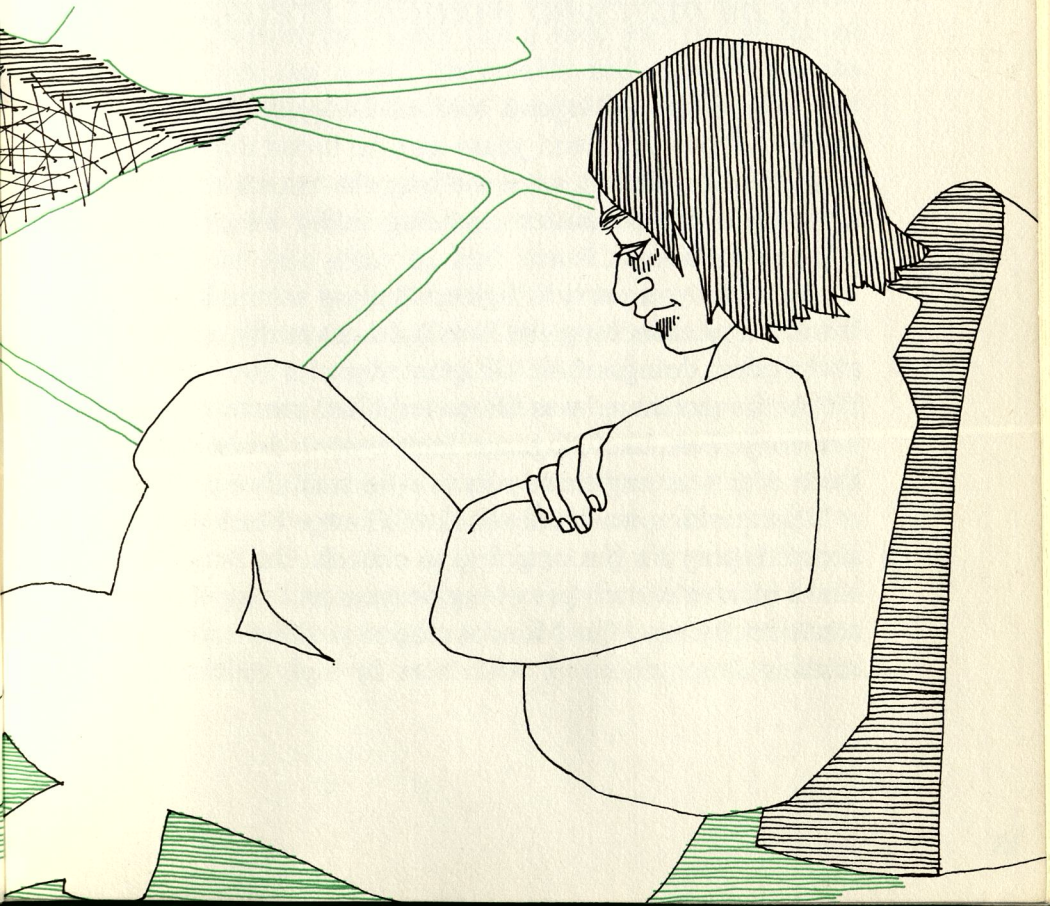


was a great nuisance to keep thousands of them in jail, yet when soldiers broke into a Quaker Meeting, they knew not which one to arrest. There was no preacher. One person seemed just as important as another. If they dragged out the men, the women would go quietly on with the Meeting. The story is told that at one place the soldiers arrested all the men and all the women, and still the children kept on with the Meeting. Sometimes the soldiers threw these Quakers out of the door of their Meeting House by twos and threes, and they would climb back through the windows and take their places again. Their Meeting Houses would be pulled down and the next day these Quakers would gather at the same hour to sit on the heaps of stones and broken rafters. Sand and mud might be thrown upon them; but there these determined people would sit as if nothing had happened.

More than three thousand of these Quakers at one time preferred to lie in the dark close prisons of England rather than give up their struggle for the right to worship God as they chose.

Even when George Fox was sick and near to dying after months in prison, he was unwilling to accept his chance to be free. His own wife, in spite of the danger, had gone to the King and pled for her husband. The King had decided to pardon him, but George Fox would accept no pardon, not even a pardon from the King. George Fox felt that what he had done needed no pardon.

"A pardon is given only to those who are guilty of wrongdoings," he said. "I have obeyed God rather than men. I would rather lie in prison all my days than to come out in any way dishonorable to the truth."



3

The man who wouldn't pretend

There is an old legend told of Diogenes, the Greek thinker of two thousand years ago. In broad daylight this strange old man was seen walking the streets of Athens carrying a lighted lantern, staring oddly into the faces of everyone he saw.

"Why do you carry a lighted lantern in the daytime? What are you looking for?" asked a passerby, surprised at the queer doings of the old man.

"An honest man," was Diogenes' blunt answer.

George Fox, like Diogenes, had come to doubt whether there ever was anywhere a man who was always honest.

This question was really back of George Fox's puzzling about tipping his hat or going to church. On Sundays he heard men in church pray long prayers and sing the most beautiful hymns. On Mondays he saw these same men in their shops cheating customers by slyly selling them

poor vegetables or fruit. Men who went regularly to church he found went regularly also to the village inn and drank beer or rum until they were drunk and silly.

When George Fox was a young man of nineteen, he had an experience that so cut him to the heart that his whole life was changed. He was walking about at a country fair, when his cousin and a friend met him and said, "Come, George, let's have a jug of beer together. Each will pay for his own share."

For years he and the boys had been friends. At church especially, the cousin had been a model of good behavior. Naturally trusting them, George went into the inn with them, and each drank a glass of beer. Then the other two boys began asking for more, and each drank a second glass, and even a third. Still the two would not stop. They were having too good a time to think of anyone else but themselves. "Let's run a race and see which of us can drink the most," they said, and agreed that the one who drank the least, as a penalty, would have to pay for all.

George sat too amazed to argue. Putting his hand in his pocket, he pulled out a groat, which was enough to pay for the one glass he had drunk. Laying it on the table before the boys, he said, "If it be so, I will leave."

George Fox went home but he could not sleep. He did not go to bed all night long. He had a heavy ache inside that came from feeling that there was nobody he could trust. Promises meant nothing. All alone he sobbed and tried to pray. He had a feeling that he must get away from his friends and even from his family. He longed to talk with someone who would say only the truth. Surely there must be some minister somewhere whom he could trust. George Fox longed to ask many questions about God and how to live, but he felt that it was useless if the

ministers said one thing and really thought something different. This experience brought the final disappointment that led George Fox to leave home and to start forth in his search of God. During the two years of his lonely wanderings, he was also hunting all the while, like Diogenes, for an honest man.

As for himself, George Fox determined that he would never pretend to be what he was not, and that he would never say what he did not mean. He began watching his own words very carefully. He found that along with everybody else he often spoke very thoughtlessly. He caught himself saying, "Good-morning" to a stranger passing on the street. "Do I really wish him a good morning?" he asked himself. "I must not even say 'good morning' unless I really wish him to have a good morning. It is better to be rude than to be dishonest."

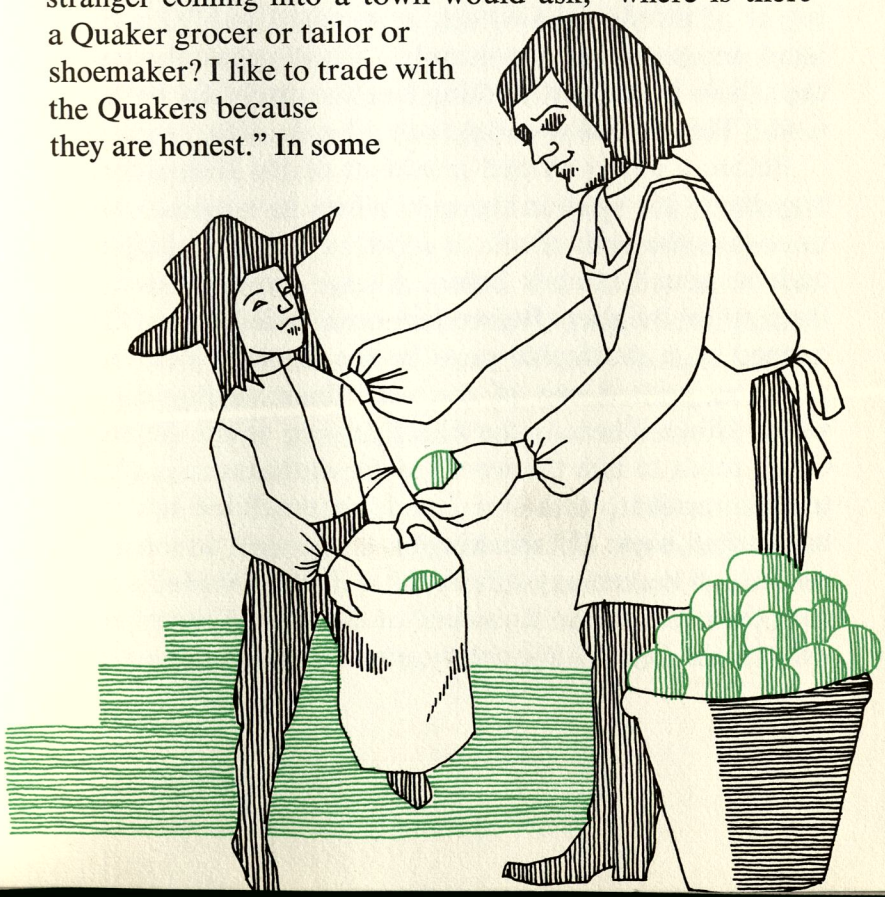
He even began asking the meaning of words others never thought of questioning. He found out that the word Sunday had come to be used long before when men worshipped the Sun as though it were a God. Sunday really meant the Sun god's day; Monday meant the Moon god's day; Tuesday, the day of Tyr, the war god; Wednesday, the day of Woden, or Odin, the father of gods and men; Thursday, the day of Thor, the god of thunder.

"I can not call the days of the week by the names of gods I do not believe in," he said. For this reason, George Fox called Sunday the First Day, and Monday the Second Day, and so on. Even yet, three hundred years after George Fox's time, some Quakers do not speak of Sunday Schools, but of First Day Schools.

This determination of George Fox to be honest was contagious. Hundreds and thousands of those who gathered about him in towns and cities of England began trying like him always to be honest. Some of these Quak-

ers were tradesmen. They had dry goods shops and groceries. They were tailors, shoemakers and carpenters. Like George Fox, when speaking to their customers, they would not put off their hats or bow. They refused to say, "Your humble servant." The customers, feeling slighted, grew shy of these queer people and refused to go to their shops until many of the Quakers were able to earn scarcely enough to buy bread for their children. As months passed, however, the people came to see that these Quakers never cheated them. If a Quaker promised to do a thing he did just what he had said. A busy mother could send her child to the shop of a Quaker and the shop keeper would serve the child as faithfully and generously as if the mother had gone herself.

Gradually the reputation of the Quakers changed. A stranger coming into a town would ask, "where is there a Quaker grocer or tailor or shoemaker? I like to trade with the Quakers because they are honest." In some



places the Quakers, for this one reason, came to have more than their share of the business.

Being honest meant even more than all this to George Fox. There was still another custom to which he objected because it seemed to imply that everybody was sometimes untruthful. Even today children have a custom that is a little like the old one to which George Fox objected. Sometimes when we wish to be very sure that a playmate is going to tell the truth, we say, "Scout's honor," or "Hold up your hand," or "Cross your heart and hope to die." In this way we get others to tell the truth by some special appeal or by making them think something terrible may happen if they do not speak truly.

Grown-ups also have a custom much like that of the children. When a man is brought into a court room to say what he knows about another man accused of stealing or of murder, the witness is required to lift his right hand and to say very solemnly, "I will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me God." This we call swearing, or taking an oath.

Before a newly elected president of the United States may begin his work in the new office, he must be sworn in or take the oath of office, as we say. When taking this oath he usually stands before a large crowd in front of the Capitol building. Before him on a table lies the Bible, opened at a particular page in the book of Micah on which is printed one of the very finest sayings in the whole Bible. Then as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court reads to him the words of the oath, the man about to be president, with one hand on the Bible and one hand lifted, says: "I (speaking his full name), do solemnly swear (or he can say affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and de-

fend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God."

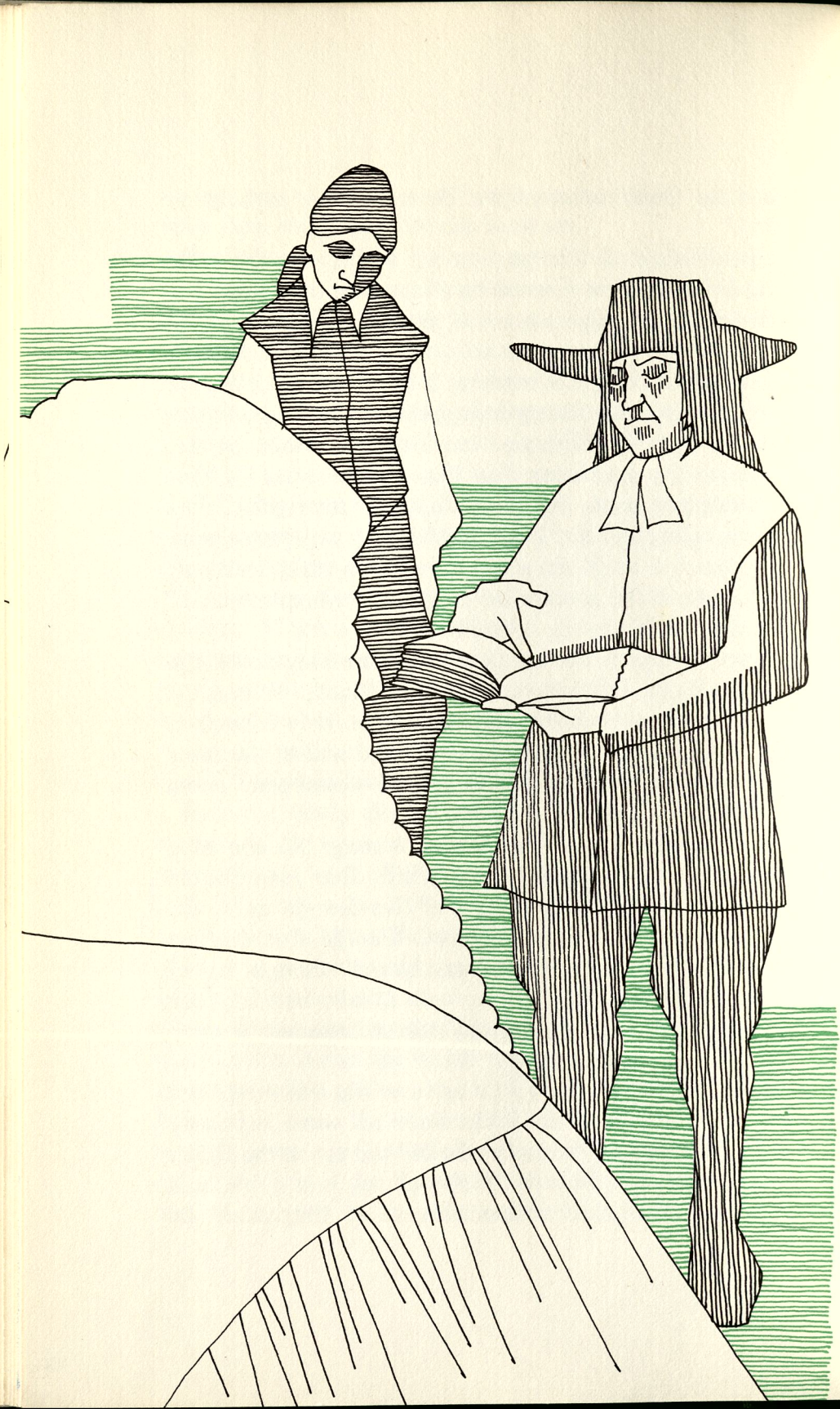
In the days of George Fox the taking of such oaths and swearing were insisted on even more than now. Not only did all the high officers of the country have to take such oaths, but anyone who was suspected of being a traitor to the king was made to take what was called the oath of allegiance. Being brought before a judge, he was handed a Bible. With one hand on the Bible, he was made to say something like this: "I do swear by God and this holy book, that King Charles is the rightful ruler of this realm, and that I will never in any way plot against him, but will at all times, so far as I am able, seek only his good and the good of his kingdom. So help me God." Then he would kiss the sacred book.

In this way, it was supposed that the king could discover who the traitors were. They reasoned, "Who is the man who would not be afraid to kiss so holy a book as the Bible and call on the name of God and at the same time speak a lie. Surely God himself would send down punishment on him."

To George Fox all this seemed wrong. No one need be frightened into telling the truth. Everyone should speak the truth at all times and live always as in the presence of God. What is more, George Fox learned from the Bible just what Jesus himself thought about swearing. Jesus said, "Swear not at all; but let your speech be, 'yea, yea; nay, nay', for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

George Fox decided to act as Jesus did. He would not pretend that kissing the Bible made his word any more dependable than it was when he did not touch the Bible.

Yet there was the law. "If any person, not noble, and above eighteen, shall refuse the oath of allegiance," he



may be sent into another country away from the king's protection; his lands, houses and all his property may be confiscated or he may be imprisoned for as long a time as the king shall determine.

To George Fox this was no law at all for it contradicted what he believed was right. Like Peter and John of old, he would obey God rather than men.

For this third reason, "the man-who-wouldn't" found himself again and again in trouble. The story of one such time when he would not swear is much like the story of many other occasions.

One morning George Fox had long been standing at the bar before the judge. Much had been said but nothing had been proved against him. The learned man in the grey wig and the scarlet gown had the power to send his prisoner back to jail for life or even to the gallows. George Fox was ready for anything; he felt that God's power was over all weakness and over death. Finally, the judge said, "Give him the Book and let him take the oath of allegiance."

The clerk lifted a Bible in front of George Fox's face for him to kiss.

"If it be a Bible," said the prisoner, "give it to me in my hand."

"Yes, yes," said the judge, "give it to him in his hand."

So George Fox took the Bible; and turning the pages he found Jesus' words about swearing. With the open Bible in his hand, the prisoner lifted his sharp grey eyes and watched the judge.

"Read the oath to the prisoner," said the judge, eager to be through with his grim business.

When the clerk had read the solemn oath, the judge turned to the prisoner and said: "Wilt thou or wilt thou not take this oath?"

"Ye have given me a book here to kiss, and to swear on, and this book which ye have given me says, 'Swear not at all . . . but let your speech be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' I do as the Book says, yet ye would imprison me. How comes it ye do not imprison the Book for saying 'Swear not at all'? How comes it that the Book is at liberty amongst you, which bids me not to swear, and yet ye imprison me for doing as the Book bids me?"

Such answering back was impudence. The clerk snatched the Bible from the prisoner's hand, and the judge cried, "Nay, but we will imprison thee," and to prison he was sent.

Hundreds of his Quaker followers were just as stubborn and as fearless as George Fox. Some of these died in prison and some were carried away on board ship as slaves. George Fox's own noble wife was a prisoner for four long years away from her husband and from her children. At any time during those years she might have been free had she been willing to swear allegiance to the king.

"Do what the Lord moves thee," she wrote from her prison to one of the king's advisors, "and what he makes way for thee; for it is no man's strength nor power that we look at, but at the Lord alone; who is the same to us that He was to Daniel in the lion's den and to the three children in the fiery furnace."

This persistent fight these honest Quakers made against oath taking, has not been without its results. Although all witnesses in courts are required to make a solemn promise to tell the truth, and all the high officers of both Great Britain and the United States are required to take an oath of office, it is no longer required that they kiss the Bible or that they use the name of God. If anyone today feels as did George Fox, he need merely solemnly "affirm" or promise and his honesty is accepted.

4

The man who wouldn't carry a sword

In England, where George Fox was living some three hundred years ago, men never knew when they might have to fight for their own lives or for their children. So they were accustomed to carry swords in their belts wherever they went, always ready if trouble came. George Fox said, "I will never carry a sword." Again, for this man who wouldn't there was a reason.

One day as he sat in the woods reading his precious Book—the Bible—he discovered Jesus' words, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also . . . Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you."

"He who loves another cannot fight him. Jesus would never fight; neither will I." This was George Fox's fourth

strange idea.

"You will change your mind some day," said a friend to him; "then you will say that God taught you another way." Nor was this friend the only one who thought that in the face of some real danger George Fox would forget his decision.

One Sunday morning as the church bells were ringing and "struck at his heart," as he said, God seemed to be calling him to go to the church and speak. George Fox sat very quietly until the meeting was over and the people started to go home. Stepping quickly to the platform he motioned to show that he had something to say. This in itself was not such an unusual thing to do. Men often spoke in this way after the church service.

Seeing him about to speak, a judge sitting in the congregation said: "It is all right, Mr. Fox. You may speak provided you do not say anything that is different from what the Bible says."

"Thank you," said Mr. Fox, "I will speak only what agrees with the Bible. I will prove all I have to say by the Bible."

What he did say, however, was very different from what the minister had just been saying. For awhile the people listened very eagerly, but not for long.

Soon the judge interrupted, "He is not speaking according to the Bible. He is an enemy of the country. He is plotting against the king and the church. Put him out."

The judge's words were like a match setting fire to a haystack. In a moment the church was in an uproar. Some tumbled over the seats in their excitement. They struck George Fox with their fists. They threw him on the floor.

They dragged him out of the church and down the main street of the town, and then on out into a meadow a

quarter of a mile beyond. A jeering and shouting crowd ran after them. On their way they broke branches from the trees by the roadside and picked up sticks from the ground. When they had him in the meadow they began striking him with the sticks until he was so weak that he fell unconscious in a heap on the grass. As he lay on the ground and his senses came slowly back to him, he asked himself, "What shall I do?" In the story he told his friends afterwards, he said "The words of Jesus came to me again. 'Love your enemies. Pray for them that abuse you.' "

The waiting crowd were watching him as he lay as if dead. When they saw his body move slightly on the ground, they pushed close and raised their sticks and branches ready to strike again the moment he tried to stand. But what did they see? How dared he stand so straight and look so fearlessly at them? Was he bewitching them, too? The crowd stepped back. They stood as if stunned as they saw his two bleeding arms stretched out and his voice clear as a bell. "Strike again! Here are my arms. Here is my head. Here are my cheeks. Strike them again. I will not strike you back."

Only one man in the crowd had any daring left. With a hard laugh, he pushed his way forward and with his stick struck George Fox such a blow on his wrist that the arm fell as if dead at his side. The crowd groaned. "His hand is crushed." "He will never be able to use it again," someone cried. They turned one by one and walked away, for they had lost all their courage.

As for George Fox, he felt "the Lord's power spring through him," as he said; and, instead of leaving the town as he had been ordered to do, he walked back into the market place and made his way about calmly among the very people who had been flogging him so short a

while before.

A soldier with helmet and sword, surprised at seeing him, said, "I was one of those who struck you. I am ashamed and sorry. If I can ever do anything to help you, let me know."

"I have no need of thy sword, thank thee," said George Fox. He who would not carry a sword himself had no use for the sword of another.

Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England, was one of those who thought George Fox would change his mind. Since Cromwell believed so strongly that fighting was right, he could not understand how so brave and so sensible a man as George Fox could think it was wrong. He felt sure he himself had been doing right when he had raised an army and had fought King Charles. Had he not done it for the good of the common people who had been treated so unfairly by King Charles? His armies had marched into battle singing hymns, and before fighting they had always prayed. Had not God himself helped Cromwell win? Surely fighting was sometimes necessary, he thought, in order to bring peace. Perhaps Cromwell could persuade George Fox to change his mind.

Then rumors were heard in the palace that these Quakers were not so peaceable as they themselves claimed. In those quiet meetings of theirs, it was said, they were plotting against the government, and that George Fox some day would have so many followers that he would organize an army and make himself king.

Something must be done. Soldiers learned his whereabouts and broke up his meetings. They ordered him to promise that he would go to no more such gatherings.

"I shall go to meetings whenever God tells me to go." They might as well have told him not to breathe.

"You must then promise that you will never fight

against the government," they said.

This promise he would gladly make. As he tells us in his own words, "I was moved of the Lord to write a paper to the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, wherein I did, in the presence of the Lord God declare that I denied wearing or drawing a sword or any other weapon against him or any man; and that I was sent from God to turn people from darkness to light, and to bring them from the causes of war and fighting to the peaceable living Jesus taught."

"The writing of a promise is so easy; so also is the breaking of it," said the officers who were suspicious of this preacher.

Fox was holding as many meetings as ever, now in this city and now in that. Everywhere he went he made a disturbance. He even had the daring to walk up to the drawbridge of the castle and preach to those on guard. Some soldiers even were turning Quakers; they were throwing away their swords and refusing to be soldiers any more. One ship's commander had written to Cromwell saying that his very best gunman had turned Quaker and now refused to fire a gun.

It is not strange that George Fox was imprisoned as a traitor. Oliver Cromwell heard the news of his imprisonment. He remembered the long talk that day in the palace long before and was sorry for the good man. Surely Fox was not a traitor. Finally the thought came to Cromwell that perhaps he could persuade George Fox to be an army officer if he promised to set him free. Fox might even yet change his mind about fighting.

Messengers were sent at once to the prison. They ordered the jailer to bring the prisoner forth into the market place where a band of soldiers were gathered.

Without lifting his hat to salute the officer, the prisoner in the leather breeches faced him. Paying no attention to

the insult, the officer spoke, "Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of all England, offers you your freedom if you will become captain of his army."

On hearing this the soldiers cheered. "We will have none but George Fox." Surely now he would change his mind.

Stiff as an oak the prisoner stood and with a voice clear as a bell he answered, "All wars and all fighting come about because men are selfish and jealous of each other and hateful. Every soul is important in the eyes of God. I could never use a sword to kill any man, not even my bitterest enemy. I am a follower of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. He would have us live such lives as will take away all occasions for war. I will accept orders only from Him."

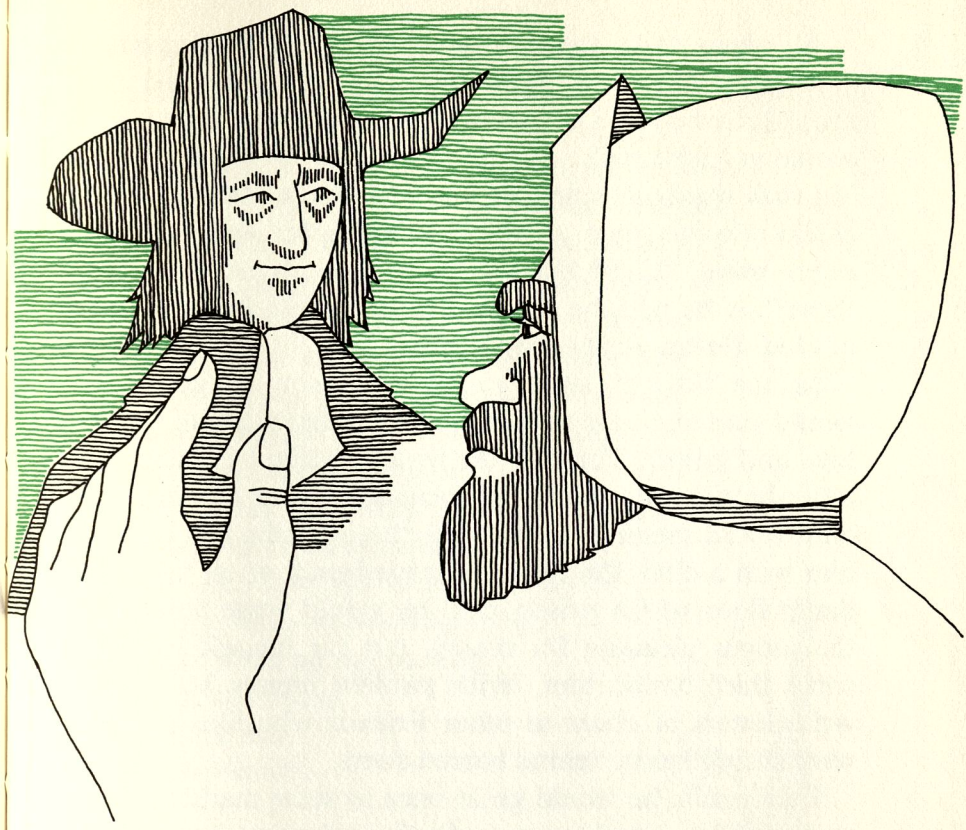
The officer could not believe that the prisoner before him really meant what he had been saying. He began to flatter him. "This is a very unusual opportunity we are offering you. You will have a good salary. You will be honored by all men. Oliver Cromwell needs such brave men as you to help bring peace in England. It is because we love you and wish to be kind to you that we offer you this."

"If that is your love and kindness I trample it under my feet."

Angrily the officer cried out, "Take the prisoner back to jail."

With his hands tied behind him and with the taunts of the soldiers ringing in his ears, George Fox was led away once more behind the prison walls, this time to share a room with thirty criminals of the worst sort, with not a bed for any of them.

Twice during the long winter, Cromwell sent messengers to Fox with the same offer of freedom. They tried



to bribe him with the promise of an even larger salary if he would fight, but he would have none of their money.

Finally, he was ordered to appear before one of the very highest officers of Cromwell's army. This officer *commanded* Fox to become a soldier.

"You are commanding a dead man," said Fox.

"You seem very much alive."

"I am dead to all war. Where there is envy and hate, all is confusion. I will have none of it."

So once again this man of peace was sent to the small bare prison room to join his old companions, thirty thieves and murderers.

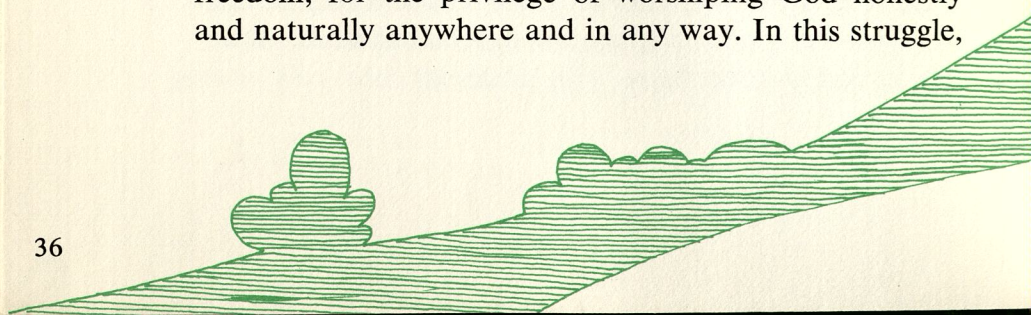
So these have been stories about "the Man-who-wouldn't." There are other stories that might be told; for the Man-who-wouldn't was also a Man-who-would. He would not fight with a sword but he was continually fighting with words. His helmet was truth as he saw it and his shield was his own goodness, his respect and love for every man. "If all the spirits and devils in hell were there," as he said, he felt he was over them in the power of God. He was never conquered.

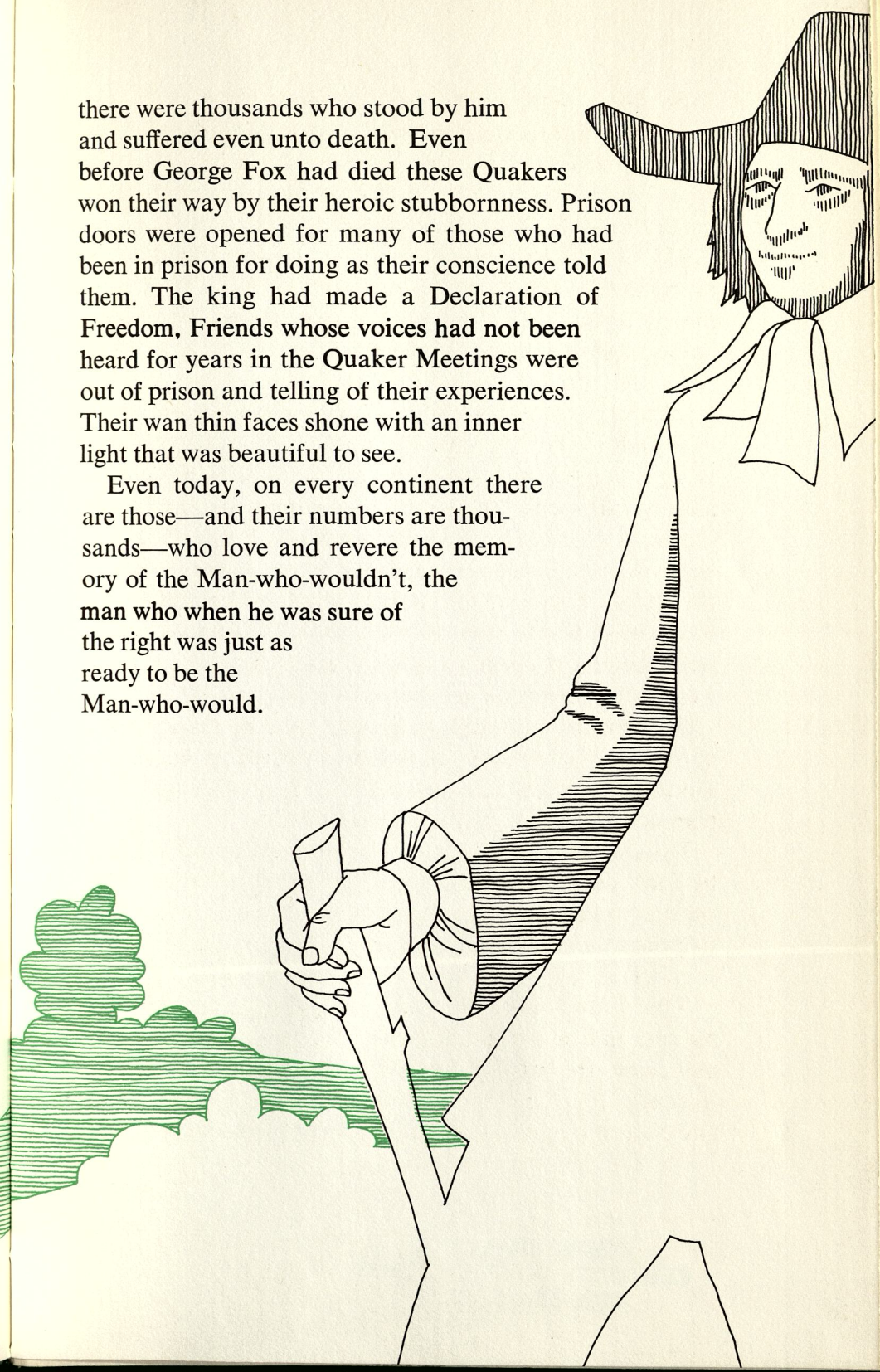
In the filthiest, most sickening prison dungeon, he would sing and talk with his fellow sufferers about God's love and power. Through the small grating by which the jailer brought him his daily bread and water, this fearless man would speak "the truth" to the one who had beaten him with a club. On the hard stone bench or on the cold damp floor of his prison cell, he would write letters to the judges pleading for mercy, not for himself but for some thief beside him. With swollen fingers he would write letters of cheer to other Friends who like himself were sitting lonely behind barred doors.

Free again, he would go at once to some market place or to a fair or perhaps to a Quaker Meeting house and there he would preach. He used the plain language of the common workman, and the people liked it.

Up and down the hills of England, on horseback and by foot, he traveled. He cared not for wind or rain. He went as unhesitatingly among those who had taken him to prison as among those who looked to him as God's prophet.

The Man-who-would was struggling to make life happier and more just for everyone, big and little, rich and poor. He was fighting with his mind and heart for freedom, for the privilege of worshiping God honestly and naturally anywhere and in any way. In this struggle,



there were thousands who stood by him and suffered even unto death. Even before George Fox had died these Quakers won their way by their heroic stubbornness. Prison doors were opened for many of those who had been in prison for doing as their conscience told them. The king had made a Declaration of Freedom, Friends whose voices had not been heard for years in the Quaker Meetings were out of prison and telling of their experiences. Their wan thin faces shone with an inner light that was beautiful to see.

Even today, on every continent there are those—and their numbers are thousands—who love and revere the memory of the Man-who-wouldn't, the man who when he was sure of the right was just as ready to be the Man-who-would.